



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### LA COUNTY SMOG CHECK STATIONS LICENSES SUSPENDED

*Bureau of Automotive Repair alleges “clean piping”*

LAWNDALE – Two Los Angeles County Smog Check stations and a technician have had their licenses suspended pending a revocation hearing as a result of an investigation by the Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR).

An Administrative Law judge has granted BAR’s request for Interim Suspension Orders (ISO) to immediately suspend the Automotive Repair Dealer registration and Smog Check Test Only station license of Ralph’s Smog Check, 17111 Hawthorne Blvd. and Southbay Smog Check, 17111 Hawthorne Blvd. Unit A, in Lawndale.

In addition, the judge suspended the Advanced Emission Specialist Technician license of Mohamad Yousef Elhaj, who is the owner of Southbay Smog Check and is employed as a Smog Check Technician at Ralph’s Smog Check.

BAR investigations of the two Smog Check stations revealed 7 instances of clean piping at Southbay Smog Check and 12 instances of clean piping at Ralph’s Smog Check. The illegal smog certificates were issued by the owner, Mohamad Yousef Elhaj, and Smog Check Technician Vaghik Shahnazarian.

“Clean piping” is when a vehicle, that would not pass a Smog Check inspection on its own is fraudulently inspected and certified as passing. To accomplish this, a technician or other individual uses a clean exhaust sample from another vehicle that will pass a Smog Check while entering data for the vehicle for which the smog certificate is required.

“The bottom line is clean piping is against the law,” said DCA Acting Director Brian Stiger. “Dirty air is a problem for everyone and BAR will act quickly to put bad players out of business.”

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“When a shop illegally certifies vehicles that do not meet emissions standards, it only makes the problem worse,” said BAR Chief Sherry Mehl. “What many people fail to realize is that keeping their vehicles well maintained not only helps clean our air, but also saves them money in the long run.”

BAR sought the ISOs to shut down Southbay Smog Check and Ralph’s Smog Check in Lawndale and prevent Mohamad Yousef Elhaj from being able to work as a licensed Smog Check technician while BAR proceeds with its enforcement case. BAR is seeking to permanently revoke all licenses.

The Smog Check Technician license of Vaghik Shahnazarian was revoked by the Department of Consumer Affairs on April 15, 2011.

An administrative hearing will be held at a later date to address the violations found during the investigation. Additionally, BAR has submitted the results of the investigations to the Office of the Los Angeles County District Attorney for criminal prosecution.

*The Department of Consumer Affairs promotes and protects the interests of California Consumers. Consumers who wish to file a complaint against an auto repair facility can contact the Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair at (800) 952-5210. Consumers can also file a complaint online at [www.autorepair.ca.gov](http://www.autorepair.ca.gov).*

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